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1902





The Bishop's Move

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

Frank M. ... B. ...

By

John Oliver Hobbes

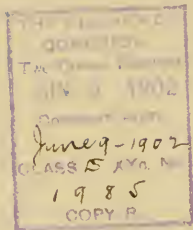
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THE BISHOP'S MOVE.

“The potential complement of the Bishop is eight and three fourths.” Minor Tactics.

CHARACTERS OF THE PLAY.

AMBROSE, Bishop of Rance
FRANCIS HERICOURT, His nephew
MONSIGNOR CAMPDEN
THE DUCHESS OF QUENTEN.....
MRS. HERICOURT, Sister to the Bishop.....
BARBARA ARRETON
BROTHER HILARY.....
HOUSEKEEPER, At the Chateau de Rance.....
MUSICIAN.....

Printers, lay Brothers, servants.

ACT I. SCENE—Refectory of the Abbey of Veyle,
near Dinan.

Three weeks pass.

ACT II. SCENE—The Drawing room of the Chat-
eau de Rance.

One night passes.

ACT III. SCENE—The morning room at the Chat-
eau de Rance.

ACT I.

SCENE:—The Refectory of the Abbey of Veyle, near Dinan in Brittany. A printing press is set along the walls. There is a writing table with papers on it and a large pewter ink-pot. The pulpit overlooking the refectory must be in a conspicuous position. The windows above the printing press are mullioned, one is broken and covered with canvas, which must also be visible to the audience. There is a small side door leading into another room and two large double doors at the back. There are no other exits. Before the curtain rises the Brothers are heard chanting, they continue for a moment or two after the curtain has risen. When they cease, a bell rings and the workmen seated at the printing press rise and go out. Monsignor Campden is seated at the table writing.

Francis Hericourt in the dress of a seminarist, is pacing up and down.

FRANCIS—They seem ready for their dinner. (L. C.)

MONSIG:—The Bishop gives them such excellent meals, that every peasant in the district will soon turn printer. But his lordship will not see that they are eating up more than the profits.

FRANCIS—Probably he makes their work an excuse for feeding them during the slack months. He must know that it doesn't pay.

MONSIG:—There is very little that your uncle does not observe! Although tinkering is his hobby,

he is even clever enough to know that he cannot mend watches! There are three returned this morning, and a lock, and as for the printing—

FRANCIS—But then it amuses him. (Goes to table R.C.) I often wish I had some peaceful simple hobby like this, which would bring me contentment. (Sighs) And yet, it's rather dull being contented.

MONSIG :—(Looking at him) It is not a common form of dullness, at any rate.

FRANCIS—It's an awful thing when a fellow wants to be noble—and then, it is a certain handicap (Brother Hilary enters with some letters which he places on the table) to have such a fine man as uncle in the family. You keep feeling that you are falling below the standard. (Goes L.)

MONSIG :—What does the post mean at this hour?

HILARY—There has been a special train from Paris, Monsignor, and this mail was brought privately through the kindness of the Duchess of Quenten.

FRANCIS—(starting slightly) Whom did you say? (comes to C.)

HILARY—The Duchess of Quenten. (Long pause) (Brother Hilary goes out) (Francis pacing up and down L. Type Bus :)

MONSIG :—I wonder what brings her to this part of the world. But she is an impulsive creature, and, as she is always uncertain, it is a mercy that she has the means to take a special train whenever she requires change of air. (Throwing down type) You are very restless this morning, Francis. You are not much like your uncle.

FRANCIS—(Advances to C.) How could I be like a bishop at my age?

MONSIG :—You might be like a budding Bishop!

FRANCIS—I often wonder what my uncle was at three and twenty. Do you suppose he always knew that his vocation was really for the Church?

MONSIG:—Surely you find him sympathetic?

FRANCIS—Yes, that is the strange thing; he is so awfully good and yet he understands everybody. Sometimes, I think it may be because he had a French father and an English mother.

MONSIG:—I don't follow your argument, my boy.

FRANCIS—Well, he seems to have a French soul and an English heart. In a way, I dread the talk I am to have with him this morning. You see it will be decisive. I have got to say what I mean to do with my life.

MONSIG:—Perhaps he will help you to decide.

FRANCIS—Yes, but when you have to be helped to decide a thing it is always something you don't want to do.

(Brother Hilary comes in hurriedly, through small door)

HILARY—His lordship is coming. (Closes small door and opens double doors)

MONSIG:—It is almost amusing! His lordship knows just how long it takes him to get from one room to another. He will time himself exactly and never lose a minute.

FRANCIS—(Down L.C.) Oh, I do wish I were not so nervous!

MONSIG:—(Rises) My dear boy, he will lead you along without your suspecting it. I don't know a man on earth who can be so delightful with young people as your uncle. He has kept that freshness of feeling which is rare enough in youth nowadays.

(Brother Hilary opens the double doors at the back of the stage. The cloisters can be seen beyond, down which the Bishop is slowly pacing. The cloisters are overgrown with rose vines and flooded with sunlight. A little grass plot is in the square formed by the cloisters. The Bishop is in his purple cassock and wears a biretta. He enters slowly, carrying an open book and repeating his office in

a low tone. He advances quietly down the stage and does not close his book till he finds himself facing Francis.

Hilary goes out, closing the double doors behind him. As Bishop enters Monsig: drops down R.)

BISHOP—It is a most extraordinary thing, but although I have a good many reasons to feel anxious about the roof, and the new aisles, I have the feeling that we shall get the money and the poor Brothers will be in beautiful quarters before Christmas. I had that feeling—it came to me five minutes ago. I cannot get rid of it. I waved it aside as a fancy—an over-sanguine fancy—yet, it remains.

FRANCIS—(Going forward and kissing the ring respectfully) That roof has been a great trouble to you, uncle.

BISHOP—Well, you see, we have tried a couple of bazaars—they did—

(Monsig: coughs)
pretty well. But the expenses were enormous. I forget what we made altogether, but I know it did not come anywhere near the roof. Then we put this little printing press, (looks round the room) and it seemed such a good way of encouraging the purchase of useful literature and paying off the builder—There again we had encouragement.

(He turns to Monsignor Campden)

MONSIG:—And then the fresco.

BISHOP—Ah, I mustn't forget the fresco. We discovered it a year ago at the back of the pulpit. (Points up) Some people think it is a genuine Da Vinci. "The Temptation of St. Anthony" (Curtain Bus:) St. Anthony, I regret to say, has been sadly effaced by time, but the Temptation is clear (Standing C. by table), very clear. No doubt this interesting work of art has attracted many visitors. We don't make any

charge, but we expect them to buy a little book, or one of these medals which we have had struck off.

(He lifts up some from a tray)

Who was it made a good suggestion the other day about liqueurs—a local liqueur? But what we want more than anything else is a miracle. (Sees the watches on the table) But dear me, what are these watches?

MONSIG:—(Trying to keep serious—in front of table.) They don't seem to be keeping satisfactory time, my lord.

BISHOP—How is that? I pulled them all to pieces with the greatest care, and readjusted them. What a strange thing! I assure you, if I tested that mainspring once, I tested it twenty times to make sure it was all right. It will end in my getting a new one.

(Monsig: moves away)

This belongs to the poor old Mere Druet, doesn't it?

MONSIG:—(Comes up to table again) Ah, my lord, I always know when you undertake to mend the mainsprings that it means a certain loss to the treasury of—

BISHOP—(Interrupting) It's never more than seventy francs. (Anxious to change the subject) What is that—the post?

MONSIG:—Yes, my lord, it was brought down by someone who left Paris by a special train.

BISHOP—Uncommonly obliging. Anything of importance?

MONSIG:—I have not looked at it yet, my lord. I was just about to do so.

BISHOP—Well, well, take them to my room, while Francis and I have a little chat.

(Monsig: Campden takes up the packet and goes out of the room, door R., leaving the Bishop and his nephew alone. The boy looks embarrassed, goes round to R. at back.

The Bishop tries to appear entirely at ease but it is plain to the audience that he is anxious about the boy)

BISHOP—(Looking up at window mended with canvas) I want your advice, Francis.

FRANCIS—(Starting) Mine?

BISHOP—Yes, when I have the money to mend that window, I am going to have coloured glass. Now what color would you choose? (Attable)

FRANCIS—(At once) Blue. A lovely turquoise blue—or rather, a blue that is more—sapphire than turquoise—(He looks intently into the distance)

BISHOP—(thoughtfully) Ah, a sort of sapphire, turquoise blue. Is that your favourite colour?

FRANCIS—(Self-consciously) Oh no, it was the first I thought of.

BISHOP—(Rubbing his chin) Hum. My mother, I remember, had blue eyes, very beautiful calm blue eyes.

FRANCIS—(Ingenuously) I think those are the most beautiful kind to have.

BISHOP—(Looking at him carefully) Yes, no doubt. (Sits) Well now, my boy, how does this place strike you? You have been with Father Helyot three weeks. I have carefully avoided you, because I thought that better. I wanted you to learn your own heart without any interference from older people. Your mother hasn't written to you and she hasn't been once to see you, I hope?

FRANCIS—No, I have been entirely by myself. (R. below table)

BISHOP—I am glad she kept her word. It must have been a temptation for her when she was so near. Now, what conclusion have you come to?

FRANCIS—Well, I don't seem to know what I want. (Crosses L.) I was very happy at the monastery—in fact I was happier each day than the one before.

BISHOP—Getting near the end of your time, eh?

FRANCIS—Well, the last days were certainly pleasanter than the early ones. It is a little shut in.

(Looks round the walls apprehensively)

BISHOP—The idea came to you sometimes that you would like to see what was going on outside? You remembered Paris, the parties, the companions of your own age?

FRANCIS—Yes. (Goes to Bishop C.)

BISHOP—You have not told me whom you met in Paris besides your mother and her friends.

FRANCIS—Well, there were some of the fellows from Beaumont. Some of them had sisters.

BISHOP—(Apparently not interested) Naturally.

FRANCIS—And there was Barbara of course.

BISHOP—Barbara who?

FRANCIS—Barbara Arreton.

BISHOP—Ah yes—(Rises—crosses to printing press. Francis crosses below table at same time) a nice girl, I believe.

FRANCIS—(Heartily) Very nice.

BISHOP—(Unconcerned, turning over printing) Is she at all like her father, Colonel Arreton, the regular Saxon type?

FRANCIS—No, she is dark—sort of gypsy.

BISHOP—Ah, indeed—and any one else?

FRANCIS—Well, we used to see a good deal of the Duchess of Quenten.

BISHOP—(Lifting his eyebrows) To be sure—She has been a widow now for five years.

FRANCIS—Now she is a saxon type, if you like.

BISHOP—(Carelessly) Golden hair and blue eyes, you mean?

(His eye wanders toward the window that has to be mended)

FRANCIS—Although she has lived so much in France and married a Frenchman, she is as English as I am, and you can be when you choose. (Moves to C.)

BISHOP—No doubt she was very kind to all of you.
(to L. of Francis, brings type)

FRANCIS—Yes, she was.

(There is a little pause)

BISHOP—Well, I am a little nervous, do you know,
(Crosses R.) about my post. I will just go in
and speak to Campden a minute. So you want
a sapphire-blue window—

(He goes out and Francis is left looking
after him)

FRANCIS—I always wonder how much he knows.
(Remains by L. of table, looks up at window)
He is so easy to talk to and yet—

(He takes up the office book from the table
and, looking at the fly-leaf reads)

Ambrose Philip Rias, 1865. Why, he has had
this ever since he was my age (Puts down book)
but we are not all born alike I'll—(crosses L.)
just see where my thumb comes—(Comes back
and takes up book. He opens the book at ran-
dom) Oh! (reads) "Thy wife shall be as a
fruitful vine on the sides of thine house; Thy
children like olive plants round about thy table."
I say—that's a sign, of course! I can't be happy
here! (Crosses L.)

(He puts the book down and walks away,
then returns evidently with the intention of
trying again, when at that moment the
Duchess of Quenten appears in the pulpit in
the wall, up R.)

DUCHESS—(as though she were preaching) Oh,
my brother—

FRANCIS—(starting) Duchess!

DUCHESS—(Continuing) Oh, my brother, I want
to impress upon you that the world has nothing
to offer which can compare with the peace and
beauty of this scene. I want you—

FRANCIS—Oh, you mustn't. You mustn't make
fun. How did you get there?

DUCHESS—(Laughing) Is this a respectful way to

address a saint? Fancy asking a saint how she got there!

FRANCIS—You mustn't! That hasn't been used for years.

DUCHESS—It is a fancy of mine. I want to pretend that this is a balcony and that you are a very young, extremely handsome—we are only pretending, mind—romantic and high-spirited, reckless—I don't know any more words, but that is what you are, and now you are to tell me what I am.

FRANCIS—I think that you ought to come down.
(goes right up to balcony)

DUCHESS—I will come down in a minute. You don't seem at all pleased to see me.

FRANCIS—I dare not believe that it is true. (Below balcony.)

DUCHESS—Well, I heard that your mother had sent you away with Father Helyot for a long retreat. She thought it would be good for you, and I heard that when the three weeks were over you were to decide on your choice of a vocation. I said to myself, "I think I will help him to decide." The good Bishop is the greatest help, no doubt, but bishops have principles, whereas women have instincts! I took the trouble to come all this way to see an extremely ungrateful, very depressed, rather pompous little boy.

FRANCIS—You don't seem real up there. I want you to come down.

DUCHESS—Where is your uncle? I worship your uncle.

FRANCIS—He will be back in a minute.

DUCHESS—(Hastily) Then I will come down.

(She disappears from the pulpit and Francis takes up the pewter inkstand and tries to see his hair in it. He walks towards the door of the inner room to see if it is quite closed, then goes to meet the Duchess as she enters

C. She gives him her hand which he kisses and keeps. They come down C.)

FRANCIS—You are an angel!

DUCHESS—I was only a saint before; evidently I am on promotion.

FRANCIS—No, no—don't laugh. I am serious. I cannot believe you came all this way because you knew I was wretched.

DUCHESS—Have you been wretched? Let me look at you. (She peers into his face.) Why, so you are! You look too good to live! It is unnatural. Oh, Francis, I was so lonely after you left Paris. I went out to three different things every night. I danced till two in the morning. I knew I could have a good rest during Lent. I went to all the theatres—yes, and I attended a lot of lectures—lectures on all sorts of things but I kept thinking of you.

FRANCIS—You pity me, that is all.

DUCHESS—But it is so interesting to have somebody to pity, and I pitied you so much that my complexion literally went. (She takes him by the arm, which fills him with embarrassment, and paces the stage with him in a half maternal and confidential manner) My maid said it was the result of late hours, but I knew it was sympathy, and here I am! I want you to tell me all you have been through.

FRANCIS—I cannot remember anything; I feel a perfect fool. I want simply to stand here and look at you. (in front of table)

DUCHESS—I suppose you haven't seen any woman at all for ages. (C.)

FRANCIS—If I had it wouldn't have made any difference. I have had one face always before me—any others I think would have been in the way.

DUCHESS—(Thoughtfully) I don't think you would have said that in Paris. On the whole I am in favour of long meditations. I believe they

are very wholesome. (Takes his arm, goes L.)
They make one appreciate one's friends.

FRANCIS—(With feeling) But I am in earnest. I know now where my vocation is. I didn't know when I was talking to my uncle.

DUCHESS—Yes, I thought I could do better than the Bishop! Francis—may I call you Francis? I want you to call me Alice.

FRANCIS—That sounds so familiar. But it is my favourite name.

DUCHESS—(thoughtfully) And how will you regard me? As a sister—(pause) (he clears his throat) as a friend—(he sighs heavily) No! I think I'll just be Alice.

FRANCIS—I've only got one fear. I know I shall bore you, when you know me better.

DUCHESS—Oh, never!

FRANCIS—I wish I could feel perfectly sure of that.
(standing L.)

DUCHESS—(earnestly) You must believe it. You must believe it, dear. You see, I have had a lot of trouble in my life—not the sort of trouble which people see and understand, but the kind which they do not see and can never understand.

FRANCIS—Was it to do with love?

DUCHESS—No—(looking at him) not love. Why is it that if a woman speaks of trouble she is supposed to mean love, and when a man speaks of trouble he means something about money?

FRANCIS—Then what was your trouble? (suddenly) Ah, it was the loss of your husband!

DUCHESS—(Drily) I wish I could say so. But we were intimate strangers, he and I. I knew that he cared for nothing except copper mines, and he thought I cared for nothing at all! He could not see that I dared not care, that I had been taught to see that there was only danger—for me—in caring. I was a live creature shut up in a mummy case (lowering her voice) I need not

be in the case any more. I may come out now. I think I will.

FRANCIS—(Naively) I feel a sort of tortoise myself. (Looks around the walls) How I wish we could be quite alone together in some star—I could talk then and tell you—

DUCHESS—Now tell me all about—

(At this moment Monsignor Campden enters and stands aghast in the doorway with his hands up. Francis is very much embarrassed, while the Duchess remains unmoved and holds him firmly by the arm)

Ah, Monsignor Campden, didn't they tell you I was here?

MONSIG:—(advancing) No, I did hear that you had come by a special train from Paris, but who let you in?

DUCHESS—Well, to tell the truth, I came for some news of this boy. I never hoped to see him here. I understood he was with Father Helyot still. But, while I was waiting to see you or the Bishop I went to have a look at the Fresco. I peeped over that little pulpit—and lo and behold! there stood the boy. And how is the Bishop?

MONSIG:—(drily) His lordship will be delighted to see you.

DUCHESS—H'm!

MONSIG:—He is detained for a moment with the builder. I am sure you won't mind if he keeps you waiting a little.

DUCHESS—Is it still the roof?

MONSIG:—Yes, perhaps you would like to see it.

DUCHESS—(expectantly) Eh?

MONSIG:—Or rather where it ought to be?

DUCHESS—I should be delighted. Come along, Francis.

(As they are leaving the room, Brother Martin enters with Mrs. Hericourt and Bar-

bara Arreton. He shows them in and goes out. Mrs. Hericourt is an aristocratic woman of simple manners and should mould herself a little on the Bishop's pattern, in order to show some family resemblance. She must, above all, avoid the traditional stage accent of the stage dowager. Barbara Arreton must be a very pretty girl with delicate features and an air of common sense. She must be perfectly free of affectation and the usual tricks of the ingenue)

FRANCIS—Mother! Barbara!

MRS. H:—(aghast) My dear Duchess!

DUCHESS—Dearest Mrs. Hericourt! I was just going to see you. Do you like your hotel?

MRS. H:—(melting a little) I don't think it would suit you! One of your boxes, my dear, would fill two of the rooms. When did you arrive?

DUCHESS—I had to have a special—a nasty dirty old special! But I had made up my mind to be here to-day. I have taken a chateau in the neighbourhood—a beautiful old place with ghosts and electric light and bath rooms. You have all got to come over, everyone of you, everyone!

MRS. H:—But really—

DUCHESS—I insist. You and Barbara—Barbara will love it—and Francis, of course.

FRANCIS—(Who has been looking at Barbara during the foregoing speech) No—no! (he walks away a little)

DUCHESS—(disappointed) No? But you must come. You can have a study with a lovely view over the river: no one shall disturb you.

FRANCIS—(Firmly) No.

DUCHESS—(Puzzled, then breaks into a smile and turns to Mrs. H:) Isn't he moody?

MONSIG:—Will you come now and see the roof before the Bishop comes back?

DUCHESS—Oh yes, the roof. (She waits to see if Francis is coming)

MONSIG:—(Noticing his hesitation) You had better come, Frank, because it is rather rough walking, and we may have to move some of the planks.

(They go out, and Mrs. H: and Barbara look at each other)

MRS. H:—(Looking after the Duchess) What a fascinating creature! I get angry every time I think of her, and the moment I see her I am as limp as a rag. She can twist anybody round her little finger.

BARBARA—I suppose she can.

MRS. H:—(In a warning tone) She couldn't do it, mind you, unless she were good. There are women who can twist certain people round their fingers, but when you find one who can manage saints and sinners alike, she must be good. It is very brilliant goodness, I admit, but it is irresistible—I wish all the same she was not so brilliant with poor Francis.

BARBARA—He can't help being flattered. She is so charming, and then—her position.

MRS. H:—But she won't have a penny of money if she marries again. You know her husband was not a martyr, but a Tartar! The day she marries again, her whole fortune goes to the Church. Some ridiculous fraction—two or three hundred a year—will save her from absolute penury.

BARBARA—Then if it all goes to the Church, the Church will be very eager for her to marry again.

MRS. H:—Eager is not the word, my dear child, desirous is the proper expression!

(At this moment the builder opens the door and looks in from the inner room)

BUILDER—Yes, my lord, there are two ladies here. (He withdraws)

BISHOP—(within) Is that you, Catherine?

MRS. H:—Yes, dear Ambrose, but don't let us hurry you in any way.

(The Bishop comes in with a green baize apron over his cassock and his sleeves rolled back a little from the wrist. One hand is covered with printers' ink)

BISHOP—My dear, I am hard at work, you see. I am trying to set some type. It is the story of Balaam, and I want to encourage the natives here in this little industry. I leave the door open and they see me toiling away at my task. Well, how are you? I can work here while I am talking, in fact—but who is this? (Looks at Barbara)

MRS. H:—It is Barbara Arreton.

(Barbara bows and kisses his ring)

BISHOP—So it is! How she has grown up! (Looking at his sister) I can see she is surprised that I speak English so well. But you see my mother was English and I lived in England until I was twenty. Your father and I have had many a game of cricket together in old days.

MRS. H:—Could any of the lay Brothers show her some of the ruins while we have a short talk.

BISHOP—Certainly, certainly! (calls) Brother Hilary!

(Brother Hilary comes in)

Will you show Miss Arreton the Abbey?

(The Brother and Barbara go out)

The fact is, Catherine, I have been greatly delighted by a piece of news.

MRS. H:—What news?

BISHOP—The most amazing thing, I have had cruel moments of anxiety as you know, about the roof and the restorations generally. I want the old ruin to blossom like the rose—that is my dream.

MRS. H:—Yes, yes.

BISHOP—Well, all this morning I had a lighter feeling on the subject. I was only saying to Camp-

den that I felt something unusual in the air. My dear, by a strange coincidence, a letter has come from Paris telling me that beyond any question the Duchess of Quenten has made up her mind at last to re-marry. Just think what that means to the diocese—little less than her whole fortune!

MRS. H:—Re-marry—but whom?

BISHOP—Ah, there my informant is mysteriously silent, but he says—although she has refused every offer with such decision that most of us had come to believe that she would remain a widow to the end of her days—he says she has practically announced to my correspondent her intention of re-marrying. Oh, the relief of this unexpected windfall! But I must talk of your affairs. I suppose you want to know about the boy?

MRS. H:—Yes, I do. Has he been able to come to any sort of decision about his future career? I should be happy, of course, if he chose the Church, but in the event—

BISHOP—I sounded him this morning. A more charming boy never lived nor a better one I feel sure—he hesitates)—but—

MRS. H:—It is quite as I thought. Well, you saw Barbara Arreton, what do you think of her?

BISHOP—I scarcely saw her.

MRS. H:—Well, she is my ideal wife for Francis.

BISHOP—Ah, you are a true woman, Catherine! You come to know what he has chosen, and you bring his future wife in your pocket!

MRS. H:—Surely, Ambrose, you must see that two Christians are better than one, especially as life goes at present. I think we need more Christian families in the Church.

BISHOP—Oh, I don't say you are wrong. I merely point out that you make your prophecies come out pass by strictly legitimate means!

MRS. H:—Although I may sound worldly, you will

believe me when I say that I am convinced of the great affection which existed between these young people.

BISHOP—Then why did you send him here?

MRS. H:—Well, it was to get him away from the Duchess.

BISHOP—The blue-eyed Duchess!

MRS. H:—Yes, she turned his head. A very easy thing to do with a boy.

BISHOP—Hum, but she is a good creature and an excellent woman.

MRS. H:—Just so, but she was amusing herself at the boy's expense. Is it likely that she could care for him in any serious way? Now, Barbara would be his devoted slave.

BISHOP—And yet you are one of those, Catherine, who clamour for Woman's Suffrage and her rights! You recommend your future daughter-in-law on the ground that she would be a slave!

MRS. H:—I am thinking of my son's happiness, and no man is happy unless his wife is a slave.

BISHOP—That sounds like a quotation from one of my Wednesday afternoon addresses. It is very seldom a man, a man of ideas, has the privilege of influencing his own family!

MRS. H:—But what is more important than all is Frank's devotion to Barbara.

BISHOP—(In mock earnest) What about this devotion to the Duchess? You have sent me a promising novice, I must say! It is too bad, really!

MRS. H:—His interest in the Duchess is a passing caprice.

BISHOP—I must see them together.

MRS. H:—Well, that won't be difficult. The Duchess is here now in this very place.

BISHOP—And they never told me! That is very wrong. Catherine, she is one of my favourites. I have watched her career with positive admiration. I admit she is not lugubrious; I myself

distrust lugubrious widows! She is bright, animated, joyous—what could be more natural at her age? (suddenly) Why, the idea strikes me, could it be—can it be that Francis has captured her heart—that he is the young man for whom she is willing to sacrifice a large fortune.

MRS. H:—Sincerely, I hope not.

BISHOP—It doesn't seem suitable, although I see nothing against it, except a trifling difference in ages. She can't be more than three years older than Francis.

MRS. H:—Oh, my dear, are they suitable in any way? Imagine that woman of the world with Francis!

BISHOP—(Troubled) He is not half good enough for her—Don't be hurt, Catherine. I don't mean good in the moral sense, but the man I have always pictured for her was of a remarkable type.

MRS. H:—Just so, and I have always been so thankful that dear Francis is not remarkable.

BISHOP—But if she loves him, I couldn't be expected to discourage it.

MRS. H:—But I tell you, there is Barbara.

BISHOP—Oh, how I detest these love complications! I must judge for myself.

(The Duchess's laughter is heard outside)

BISHOP—Ah, here she comes! I do hope there will be laughter in Heaven! What is it but a form of rejoicing?

(The Duchess enters followed by Francis, Barbara and Monsig: Campden. The Duchess advances and kneeling, kisses the Bishop's ring)

Well, my child, my dear and good Duchess, I am very pleased to see you, very pleased.

DUCHESS—(Still kneeling and holding up her hands as if making a petition) I am like most people when they pray; I ask a blessing, but I want a

favour. You may regard me, if you please, as a humble follower of the importunate widow.

BISHOP—Well, my child, what is it?

DUCHESS—I want you to come and bring good luck to the Chateau I have taken in this neighbourhood.

BISHOP—But, of course, I will come—you know I have not much time—yet for a day or two—

DUCHESS—And Mrs. Hericourt is to come, and Barbara and Francis.

BISHOP—(Looking at the three) I don't know about Francis; he must decide for himself.

(He helps Duchess to rise)

FRANCIS—(embarrassed) It is very kind of you, but I feel I ought to settle down to work.

BARBARA—(Going up to him quietly) Oh, do come! You look tired, no, do come.

BISHOP—(Turning to the Duchess after looking at the boy) I think we may say that Francis will come.

(Barbara and Francis move a little away to the back of the stage. Monsig: Campden and Mrs. Hericourt walk away together talking. The Duchess and the Bishop are left looking at each other)

DUCHESS—Why does your lordship look at me so curiously? I have no secrets.

BISHOP—Does not that assurance, which ought to be unnecessary, come from a disquieted conscience, which I am sure could never be in the wrong? You have been very kind to my nephew.

DUCHESS—Did he tell you so?

BISHOP—Yes.

DUCHESS—Do you think he was born to be an ecclesiastic?

BISHOP—I don't know yet.

DUCHESS—I am sure he was not.

BISHOP—You see, my mind works more slowly than yours—I have to observe and consider—

DUCHESS—Well, what have you observed so far?

BISHOP—Well, so far, I see nothing except a young man—a young girl—and one of the most charming women in France!

DUCHESS—Anything else?

BISHOP—Yes, on the other hand, there is a great vocation—

DUCHESS—(quickly) But a lonely life!

BISHOP—(looking round the room with a smile and waving towards the printing press) Do you think one could be lonely when there is so much work to be done?

DUCHESS—(clasping her hands) Oh, Francis is not for you, he is for the world! He is good, but he is for the world. Can't you see that in his face?

(At this moment the Duchess looks round and sees that Francis is looking earnestly at Barbara. The Duchess bites her lip)

BISHOP—(repeating) As I have told you, I can only see a young man—a young girl, and perhaps, the most charming woman in France!

CURTAIN.

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE:—The Drawing-room of the Chateau de Rance. A handsome apartment with windows opening on to a terrace with a belvedere at the back of the stage. One door only at the side: a large organ is built into the other side of the room. There must be the air of an old place slightly modernized. A gardener is standing on a ladder, which is held by a small boy, hanging up festoons of flowers. A Housekeeper stands near him giving directions and help. Four men with stringed instruments are at the back. Barbara and Francis are playing chess at a card table near the front. As the curtain rises, the musicians play the concluding bars of some popular air.

FRANCIS—(to the Musicians, who rise) Quelle jolie piece! Merci beaucoup. C'était charmante!

MUSIC—Nous esperons que Madame la Duchesse sera contente avec nos humbles efforts.

BARBARA—Enchantee, j'en suis sur.

(The Musicians bow, and the Housekeeper comes down)

HOUSE:—Do you think the flowers will do, Miss, like that? I don't care for the French taste myself, but her Grace always likes to please the common people when she has them in. They like everything gaudy.

BARBARA—I think it looks charming, but won't they wither before to-morrow?

HOUSE:—Oh, no, Miss, the French are artful, their flowers are made of paper and cotton. They will introduce a few real roses here and there just before the entertainment begins. I suppose I must go and give these good men some refreshment.

(grandly, turning to the men) Voyong, par ici!

(Housekeeper goes out, followed by the Musicians, but the gardener continues his work at the back while Barbara and Francis talk)

FRANCIS—It was not so bad. Now—is it your move?

BARBARA—You are not paying much attention to the game, Francis.

FRANCIS—I am not thinking of the game. I was killing time. I wish that man would go away. We never get any chance to talk alone.

BARBARA—I often wonder what we should say if we were by ourselves.

(The Gardener gets down from the ladder and he and the boy go further back, out of sight, evidently to fetch something, for they leave the ladder and other things behind them)

BARBARA—(looking round) We are alone now, Frank, if there is anything very special you wanted to ask me.

FRANCIS—Have you been happy here?

BARBARA—(hesitating) You see it has been a long visit, nearly three weeks, and I don't think there is much fun ever for those who look on.

FRANCIS—What do you mean?

BARBARA—I say, I don't think it is very amusing to watch people that one likes, talking to people whom they like!

FRANCIS—(conscience-stricken) You haven't felt out of it, have you?

BARBARA—Well, what happens is this; you are always with the Duchess, and I am generally with your mother. Of course I am devoted to your dear mother, but I daresay she gets a little tired of me.

FRANCIS—You don't understand. One must pay attention to one's hostess, particularly if there

happens to be no other man in the party. It is common courtesy.

BARBARA—Quite so, and then, when you have to show common courtesy to such an uncommonly beautiful person, life does not look so hard as it might!

FRANCIS—You couldn't expect me not to like her, could you? You couldn't expect me not to feel grateful for all her kindness? She rescued me from my uncle. My uncle is a great and good man, I know—

BARBARA—I tell you, I understand. I am not saying a word. I could almost love her myself for all her kindness to you. I should be hard and no friend of yours, if I did not see that you were very fond of each other. I can be quite fair about it, indeed. If I didn't like her so much myself, I don't think I could stop here, because I can't help seeing—(stifles a sob)

FRANCIS—Why, what is the matter?

BARBARA—Nothing—nothing at all.

(The Duchess's voice is heard outside)

DUCHESS—(outside) Are they in the drawing-room?

(Francis clasps his hands when they hear her coming, hesitates between Barbara and going to meet the Duchess. Barbara begins to move the chessmen about, and the Duchess enters. She wears a lace gown and a garden hat and carries a parasol. She looks in radiant health and spirits)

DUCHESS—Oh, there you are! (looks from one to the other) I must have all these garlands taken down. The Bishop is unavoidably detained, and he cannot come until next week.

BARBARA—Oh, how disappointing!

DUCHESS—(cheerfully) Yes, it is disappointing, but after all, it is only a postponement. How did the rehearsal go? I heard a dreadful squeaking in the next room, but one must encourage

local talent. The Bishop insists on that, and these poor darlings have been practising hard for the last three weeks in order to please him.

FRANCIS—(thoughtfully) Does he say why he doesn't come?

DUCHESS—No, because I heard the news indirectly. I am expecting his own letter every moment, but I was out driving and met Monsignor Campden taking his constitutional. He prepared me for the disappointment.

BARBARA—Oh, how sorry I am he can't come!

DUCHESS—(with gaiety) Well, after all, we are a very happy party, and I don't care who it is that joins a quartette—things are never quite the same again! There is too much bass, or too much treble! Of course, the Bishop is of all guests imaginable the most perfect, so perfect, that you see he might lead me to neglect the others! I should be torn this way and that. Besides, you will all have to stop longer. Everything has turned out for the best! (She looks at Barbara) Have you two been playing chess?

BARBARA—I have been playing chess. (The Duchess laughs) Frank, I think, was meditating.

DUCHESS—Why was Frank absent-minded?

BARBARA—(looking a little crest-fallen) I am afraid he was bored.

DUCHESS—Poor boy! I am never bored! Now, what shall we do this afternoon? We had intended to rehearse our Gavotte. Play it Barbara.

(Barbara goes reluctantly to piano—an old fashioned one. Plays a suitable piece. Duchess and Francis laughing do a few steps. Duchess sits down)

But inasmuch as the rehearsal is stopped and the decorations are interfered with, why shouldn't we fish? Will you come fishing with me, Frank?

FRANCIS—With pleasure.

DUCHESS—(lightly) And you, Barbara, might go

for a drive with dear Mrs. Hericourt. There is a sick woman down in the village, and you may have my own, my very own Russian ponies and drive them yourself. You would love that, I know.

FRANCIS—(conciliatory) Yes, you will love that, won't you, Barbara? (to the Duchess) She is a splendid whip, although you wouldn't think it to look at her, she has got such little hands.

DUCHESS—Ah, I have seen her driving, or I wouldn't trust her with my ponies. Then that is all settled. It is a lovely drive, quite a new direction. If you start at half-past three, you can easily be back by a quarter to seven.

(Barbara is about to make a reply when Mrs. Hericourt enters rather suddenly)

MRS. H:—Oh, I have been looking everywhere for you, my dear Alice.

DUCHESS—(innocently) Have you, darling? I have made all the arrangements for this afternoon. Barbara will tell you. It is so fine—I grudge every minute indoors.

MRS. H:—Yes, but—

DUCHESS—(putting her hands to her ears) If I talk any more I shall die! I have been with my agent for hours. I want to sit in the sun. Frank and I are going fishing.

MRS. H:—Yes, but I have got—

DUCHESS—(by this time half-way out of the room) Tell me at dinner. Keep all topics till dinner! (Kisses her hand to Mrs. Hericourt and exits, followed by Francis)

MRS. H:—Now, in any other woman that would be rude—it really would! The fact is I was trying to tell her that my brother has arrived. He had no idea that he wasn't expected.

BARBARA—The Bishop arrived!

MRS. H:—He is quite annoyed with Monsignor Campden. He says he had every intention of coming. Ambrose is the last man on earth to

stand on ceremony, but he may think it rather strange to find no one to receive him.

BARBARA—Oh, I am so thankful that he has come.
(eagerly) Shall I go after them and stop them?
(goes half-way across the room)

MRS. H.—No, my dear, that won't look well. I will go myself. But what an erratic creature it is!
(She goes out, leaving Barbara in the centre of the stage. The door opens and the Bishop enters by himself)

BISHOP—(looking all round) Is nobody at home?

BARBARA—(going forward and kissing his ring)
Oh, my lord, we all heard that you were not coming.

BISHOP—(drily) So I understand, but I got through my business quicker than some of them expected. It is such an art to be able to cut things short! (comes down still looking about him in some surprise. He sees the table with the chessboard) Ah, there seems to be a neat problem here. You have got your Queen in a good position.

BARBARA—Not so good as the Bishop, my lord. I always like the Bishop's best.

BISHOP—(pretending to be absorbed in game)
May I move your Knight? The Knight is so uncertain, often!—And how are you all getting on here?

BARBARA—Some are getting on very well, your lordship.

BISHOP—I am very glad to find you alone. We must become better acquainted. I knew your dear father very well. I want you to tell me a few things quite frankly, not about other people, not tales out of school—I just want to hear something about yourself.

BARBARA—Will you be very shocked, I wonder, if I say that I don't want to live?

BISHOP—(lifting his eyebrows) That is most reprehensible!

BARBARA—I think I want to go into a convent for ever. I don't like the world any more.

BISHOP—My dear child, you must not mistake disgust for this world for a great anxiety to reach the other.

BARBARA—Nothing comes right.

BISHOP—I think heaven will do as much for you as you will do for heaven! (in a kind tone) Now what is troubling you, some little quarrel?

BARBARA—Oh, there is no quarrel, there is only despair!

BISHOP—Dear me! (putting his hand on her shoulder) Is there anyone else concerned in this? Is there another?

BARBARA—Yes.

BISHOP—Perhaps two others?

BARBARA—Yes. (blurts out) She flirts with him—she doesn't care for him—she is just amusing herself! And when it is all over, she will forget him and he may not be able to forget her. She has made him give up one vocation, and what will she give him in return?

BISHOP—She and he! Now, if he means Francis, and she means the Duchess—and I suppose that is what you do mean—have you any reason to be so much concerned about either of them? Has Frank ever said anything to you?

BARBARA—He once told me he loved me.

BISHOP—Oh—I begin to understand—so he told you that?

BARBARA—Yes, and he meant it, my lord, I know he meant it.

BISHOP—And do you love him?

BARBARA—He knows that I do.

BISHOP—This is a great surprise to me. And when did Frank tell you that he loved you?

BARBARA—In Paris, my lord.

BISHOP—And has he said anything since?

BARBARA—He has implied it. He wishes me to think so, but, just as we seem to be understand-

ing each other once more, the Duchess always comes in.

BISHOP—I must warn you that she is a very dear friend of mine; and much as I like you, I am altogether prejudiced in her favour. Does she know that Frank loved you—or said so?

BARBARA—She must have seen it. But Frank could never be so much to her as he is to me my lord. He means everything to me—I don't know why I have said so much—I wouldn't say it even to myself, but now that you are here, I feel that you understand. He means everything to me, whereas she (she looks round the room) would get tired of him in a few weeks.

BISHOP—Now, what makes you think that? Have you any right to say that her love is less constant than yours? If anyone is to blame, surely it is Frank. I am very sorry for you, my child, but the heart of youth is in its very nature fickle!

BARBARA—Oh, my lord, if I saw that she really cared for him, I could bear it all, but she does not. After six months, she wouldn't know what to say to him.

BISHOP—(kindly) We mustn't get hard, and we mustn't be so confident in our judgments at nineteen! We must be more patient perhaps a little more charitable! But we mustn't have anyone unhappy. I will look into this. If Frank told you that he loved you, I believe he spoke the truth—at the time, anyhow. (He takes a medal hung on a little chain out of his pocket) I will look into this, but in the meantime, my dear child, here is something which he lost the last time he came to see me. It is one of the medals we sell at the Abbey. The Temptation of St. Anthony. (hands it to her) Francis has scratched your name on it.

BARBARA—Oh, has he, my lord? Now, when you

get an opportunity, but not yet, give it back to him—but keep it a little.

(At this moment, the Duchess followed by Francis enters)

DUCHESS—(trying to conceal her chagrin) Oh, so you have come, and I was not there to receive you! It was not my fault. I saw Monsignor Campden, he is the culprit! But I am so glad you have come.

BISHOP—Are you really glad? Your words have a kindness which charms me, but there is just a little something in the tone, in the glance—

(The Duchess drops her eyes. Francis comes forward rather sheepishly and kisses the ring. The Bishop looks at him)

DUCHESS—It is nothing really. The fact is, I have been leading an almost unreal life lately. I am forgetting manners—I am forgetting how to talk. I think I know what people mean when they speak of being in the clouds!

BISHOP—Are you alone in the clouds? Are there no dialogues up there? And you, Francis, what have you been doing in the last fortnight? I thought you were coming down to see me.

FRANCIS—(rather shame-faced) Well, sir, I have not been master of my time altogether—one has to fall in with the plans of the day.

BISHOP—Just so. My own days, too, are very crowded.

DUCHESS—You must not scold him, my lord. You know there is a time to laugh and a time to dance—

BISHOP—But that is not all the time! Now, what have you been doing, Barbara? Have you had to fall in with plans also?

DUCHESS—(hastily) Dear little Barbara is indispensable! She is the angel in the house; no one was ever so clever or so kind.

BISHOP—(putting his hands up) Oh,—what flattery!

DUCHESS—(impetuously) But I mean it. She plays to us in the evening; she sings for us; she drives the ponies; she reads aloud—we take turns reading aloud.

BISHOP—And when you two ladies are reading, what does Frank do?

DUCHESS—Oh, he listens.

BISHOP—I see— and how long is this to go on?

DUCHESS—Now, you haven't come to scold us, have you?

BISHOP—I am afraid I have. It is an ungrateful task, but I begin to suspect that this does not seem to be precisely a case of where—"All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." But, before I forget it, Frank, I want you and Barbara to take a message into the village for me.

DUCHESS—Frank and Barbara! But—the servants—

BISHOP—I wish Frank and Barbara to take it. They are to go to the Hospital and say that I shall hope to stop there on my way home—perhaps—this evening—

DUCHESS—(relieved) Oh, must you go this evening?

BISHOP—The walk will do them both good.

(The Duchess hangs her head and the two young people go out. The Duchess paces the floor in some anger before she speaks)

DUCHESS—I don't see why—I can't understand—

BISHOP—Oh yes, you do! The boy has been here now for three weeks; you don't seem to realise that you are trifling with him. The first week he called to see me twice—I noticed a great change in him. The second week he came when he knew I would be out, and hurried away, not waiting for my return. Then this last week he has not been near me. The moment I saw him to-day, I realised that you were playing with his soul.

DUCHESS—I am not! Oh, how you misjudge me!

You know, my lord, how deeply I respect you, how I value your friendship, but you interfere—yes, you are interfering! I don't believe you can understand how that boy's innocence and inexperience fascinate me. I have been in the world all my life. I have met only men and women of the world; those who seem too good for it leave it as you have left it, but Francis is one of us although he is not like us.

BISHOP—I want to ask you a question. When you first knew him, did he seem to you at all engrossed with Barbara?

DUCHESS—(equivocating) She is an attractive little thing—and there were no other pretty girls in sight.

BISHOP—But she isn't commonplace.

DUCHESS—I always play fair. There was certainly no promise—no obligation, at least Francis never told me so. After all does one's record go for nothing? Have I ever been foolish? Have I ever made any other woman unhappy? Have I ever seemed to care at all what impression I made on any man?

BISHOP—One at a time! One question at a time. I have held you up frequently as a pattern—to say more would be paying compliments, the thing I never do. Yet I can imagine that Francis, as you say, by his unlikeness to your other friends, might please and attract you, perhaps, beyond his deserts. Again, you may not have flirted, but you know there was the Baron—

DUCHESS—Oh well, he was a very good judge of pictures.

BISHOP—Hum! And then there was that foreign Secretary—

DUCHESS—A mere question of letter-writing; one must have correspondents.

BISHOP—To be sure! And then there was the Prince—and that young fellow who hunted—and the one that painted—and the one that wrote

music—and the one that distinguished himself in the war—all attractive individuals!

DUCHESS—Yes, yes. But not like this. I maintain I did not flirt.

BISHOP—Without implying that you flirted, I may remark that I hailed each one as the possible treasure you might regard as a superbequivalent for my roof—to say nothing of the new aisles! But, do you find those qualities in Francis which could so enchain you that they would make you absolutely indifferent to all other men? Could you give up all this? Could you live in some quiet, unimportant way on that boy's own income of something under eight hundred a year? Eight hundred a year, my dear and beautiful young friend?

DUCHESS—(aggrieved) Why think of all the obstacles and drawbacks?

BISHOP—It is safer. The way to succeed in life depends on this ability to foresee and consider every difficulty in your path.

DUCHESS—But why not drift a little? Of course it would be a sacrifice if I married him—but it seems indelicate to think of it. I haven't allowed myself to consider anything of the sort!

BISHOP—(firmly) Ah, you don't love him! He attracts you by his novelty, by his ingenuousness, but this is not love.

DUCHESS—Oh, how can you say—I mean, forgive me, but this is a question that you cannot judge of. You renounced such things long ago. You have put them away out of your life.

BISHOP—The philosopher Hume has said that, if we wish to understand any experiment, we ourselves must not be one of the factors! I know, therefore, that I am right, when I say that on your side there is a caprice, and on his side there is only a boy's gratified vanity.

DUCHESS—(bursting out) But you are arguing against yourself, my lord! If I remarry, your

diocese will have all my fortune—I hate myself for reminding you of this.

BISHOP—I know that, and the diocese could make admirable use of the money. But I see no happiness in this matter. I can't allow it, I musn't encourage it. When I oppose you, I find myself in the painful position of one who has to quarrel with his greatest benefactress,, but—faithful are the wounds of a friend. I cannot see three lives ruined for the sake of a diocese or because I shirk the disagreeable duty of giving true counsel to a kind and gentle lady who does not wish to hear it.

DUCHESS—But I am in earnest. I began half in fun, I know, but now I am in earnest.

BISHOP—I know better. I know many women who can only feel thoroughly in earnest under the stress of opposition! Besides, how easy for you to beat that little girl from the field! What chance has she against you unless you choose to let her win? The triumph in this case would be your surrender. Ah! my child, I am very sorry, very disappointed, even—think of my roof—but—

DUCHESS—(greatly agitated) My lord, I will not trust myself to reply. I may be disrespectful against my will—I will go into the garden. I think I must declare war! I think I must say that we cannot remain friends—that I wish you had not come, that—that I am glad you cannot stay! I think I must try to prove that I am in the right, and that you are in the wrong.

BISHOP—I wish you could.

(The Duchess goes out)

BISHOP—(to himself) In six months' time she will be thanking me for my foresight. (He walks about the room, picking up things) I remember when I was about one and twenty, I saw someone at a croquet party. She did not speak, and I did not speak, but I saw her, and—if

any one had told me then that she was not more important to me than the entire globe, I think I should have thought him very cynical!

(He goes to the organ and begins to play. While he is playing, at the back, on the terrace, Barbara and Francis are seen talking. The Bishop in the meantime, gets sleepy over his playing and sits back, his hand falling down by the side of his chair. Barbara runs in, looks round the room, and finally sees the Bishop. She creeps up to him, stoops, and gently kisses his ring, then runs out)

BISHOP—(waking with a start and looking round) Have I reached this age in order to dream that someone came in and kissed my hand when I was asleep! (laughs at himself)

(He plays a few bars as Mrs. Hericourt enters)

MRS. H:—My dear Ambrose, I haven't heard you play for ages. What a treat it is! Don't stop—and yet, I wonder whether I shall get such another opportunity to speak with you.

BISHOP—(moves along the organ seat and looks at her intently) You are not still worrying are you, about that young cub?

MRS. H:—He is all I have, Ambrose.

BISHOP—(softening) Yes, yes, my dear—most—natural. (He comes down and sits beside her on the sofa)

MRS. H:—Surely, you can remember the dangers and difficulties of a mind given over to ideals? That is Frank's trouble. You must see that it is hard in a Christian country to choose between two most attractive women. One's elders must come to the rescue in such a case.

BISHOP—Come to the rescue! I have been rescuing him now for the last three weeks! The young beggar doesn't want to be rescued! He is enjoying the position. He doesn't thank either

of us for our admonitions and our assistance.

MRS. H:—But I can't bear the suspense. It must be settled and at once. Look at me, I have aged ten years in the last fortnight. We are powerless, Ambrose. Alice must act. And the one person who can influence Alice is yourself.

BISHOP—Did you by any chance overhear our last conversation about five minutes ago? (laughs)
She ordered me out of the house!

MRS. H:—Impossible! My dear, you exaggerate!

BISHOP—Well, in any other woman it would have amounted to that, but she did it so well—with such inimitable tact!

MRS. H:—You spoil her, Ambrose, I have always thought so. But tact or no tact, charm or no charm, I must know where I am. I must know what is to become of my boy—

BISHOP—In fact you are in such a state that you don't very much care what happens so long as he takes one or the other, inasmuch as our Christian prejudices will not allow him to have both! It was so much easier for parents and guardians in the days of Rachel Leah!

(At this moment Barbara enters)

BARBARA—Oh, my lord, the Duchess says, as you must go this evening she hopes you will order the carriage as late as possible.

MRS. H:—Surely, Ambrose, you are not going back this evening?

BISHOP—Why?

MRS. H:—Because, now you are here, we may as well have the little entertainment, after all.

BARBARA—There is a man outside now with an illuminated address which he wants to present.

BISHOP—I will come at once. And, Catherine, will you tell the Duchess in reply to her kind message that the carriage order can wait. I am in no particular hurry.

(He goes off with his sister, leaving Barbara alone on the stage. She takes the little

chain and medal which the Bishop gave her from her neck)

BARBARA—(kissing the medal) Oh, St. Anthony, do bring me some luck! Do help things to come right! You know he doesn't love her really, nor she him. I will make him such a good wife. make things come right!

(She is standing by the organ as the Duchess enters from the back with some flowers)

DUCHESS—(looking pale) Oh, Barbara, will you help me with these?

BARBARA—(dropping the chain into the organ) Oh! I am afraid something has gone into the organ.

DUCHESS—What is it?

BARBARA—(equivocating) Well, I heard something fall in with a sort of rattle. How can we get it out?

DUCHESS—Well, it will be safe there anyhow.

BARBARA—But till when?

DUCHESS—Till we can get a workman.

BARBARA—Could he come up to-night?

DUCHESS—To-night, my dear child, but there is not one for miles. I dare say we shall have to send to Lille or Paris. An organ is a very delicate instrument. (She tries to hum and seem cheerful)

(Francis enters)

(turning to him) Barbara thinks something has fallen into the organ. I can't think how it got there.

(Francis goes up to the organ, touches some of the notes and they hear a sound)

FRANCIS—Why, it has upset some of the notes—F sharp, G sharp, and G. How can we have the concert?

DUCHESS—(lightly) Oh, they can leave out G sharp when they come to it.

BARBARA—It makes such a whizzy noise.

(Francis leaves Barbara and goes over to the Duchess)

FRANCIS—How pale you look! But you are just as beautiful when you are pale—

DUCHESS—Perhaps it is the scent of the flowers.

FRANCIS—I wish we could have stayed by the river.

DUCHESS—(studying him) We were happy there, weren't we? (With restrained feeling) I love to watch your face.

FRANCIS—(prosaic and embarrassed) I am supposed to be very like my Mother.

DUCHESS—(laughing) But that isn't the reason why I love to look at you, silly-billy!

FRANCIS—(gaining courage) It is because you see sometimes how much I admire—

BARBARA—(striking note, almost in tears) Oh, it does make such a discord!

(The Bishop enters, reading an address to himself, followed by Mrs. Hericourt)

BISHOP—A most charming address! I have been compared to the sun and the moon! The valleys have not seen my equal, and the mountains tremble at the privilege of surrounding my birthplace! All the stars have had the honour of resembling me! If I hadn't a slightly stiff neck, my head would be turned!

FRANCIS—Oh, uncle can mend the organ! He can mend anything.

(The Duchess looks rigid)

BARBARA—(entreating) Something has got in behind the keys, my lord, and the Duchess does so want you to mend it before the concert. She thinks she will have to send to Paris, and that will mean days.

MRS. H.—I don't think, my dear, that Ambrose is equal to such important work.

BISHOP—I don't know. You put me on my mettle, Catherine. I can but try.

DUCHESS—(coldly) Of course, my lord, if you will stop and be so kind—I myself would not dare to ask such a favour!

BISHOP—(pleasantly) I can refuse nothing, and the curious point is that when I left home, I told them not to expect me back, although I had made my arrangements. But I had a feeling somehow that I should remain here. It was just a feeling!

(The Duchess hangs her head and the Bishop looks round at Barbara and Francis.

CURTAIN.

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE:—Morning room in the Chateau de Rance. As curtain rises, the Bishop is seen seated on the floor surrounded by organ pipes, and his hand is tied up as though injured in some way. The room, which is beautifully furnished, is littered with tools, oil cans, etc. Two pompous men servants in livery are assisting, with evident superciliousness, the Bishop. Francis is looking on.

BISHOP—Grand merci, mes amis, on ne peut pas tout faire, mais Dieu merci, je suis horloger, jardinier, imprimeur—peut-etre, je perds en ces lieux mes beaux talents. Tenez, (gives them some money) priez pour moi!

(The two men go out)

BISHOP—(looking after them with admiration) My friends sometimes deplore the fact that I am so lacking in the grand manner. (returning to his task) One should always penetrate to the bed-rock of any trouble, my dear Francis. You see I am taking this whole organ to pieces in order to find the little rift within the lute!

FRANCIS—I wonder whether that was necessary.

BISHOP—So many things are blessings in disguise, my dear boy, (ingenuously) How do I know this accident has not been sent as an excuse for a brief holiday? It is recreation for a tired man, whatever I do, I like to do thoroughly. By the bye, that reminds me, I see you have been paying court to (he hesitates slyly and hammers a little) Barbara.

FRAN:—(astonished) What did you say, uncle?

BISHOP—I say it is evident that you have decided to court Barbara. The verb to court, to me, is

an admirable, chivalrous, if old-fashioned expression. I remember a most delightful couplet in an old poem by Herrick, which says:—

“Wash, dress, be brief in praying!

Few beads are best when once we go a-maying.”

That means, court while you court, and pray while you pray. Guard against a divided mind.

FRAN:—I am afraid I must own that I don't see my way as clearly as I could wish, sir.

BISHOP—(drily) That is a very common predicament. (He leaves his work, comes down and puts his hand on the boy's shoulder and looks at him very directly) Now, if you were in a boat and there were two ladies in it besides yourself and one was Barbara, and one. . . was someone else. . . and a great storm arose and two of them fell overboard, and you could only save one, to whom would you give your hand? That is my favorite test question for hard cases of this sort. It is homely, but effective. Imagine, there is the boat, there is the deep sea, there, perhaps, is the devil, and the two ladies are here; over they go—and now, what is Francis going to do?

(Francis appears absorbed in thought)

You must not hesitate. . .

FRAN:—Oh well, poor little Barbara. . .

BISHOP—That will do, I can go back to my work now!

FRAN:—But sir, that is all imagination.

BISHOP—Ah, but it hits off the difficulty. It may not clear your way, but it clears mine.

(The Duchess is heard talking outside)

DUCHESS—(outside) You don't mean to say that his lordship is working in there! (calling aloud) Gustave, who put those chairs in the hall? Francois!

(The voices of servants are heard in violent high toned French. The Duchess enters in a hurricane of excitement and on catch-

ing sight of the organ in pieces wrings her hands)

DUCHESS—Oh my lord, my lord, my lord! this is naughty. . . my favorite room—and the organ in pieces!

BISHOP—I shall get it all right, my dear child, in about a week.

DUCHESS—In a week! But the dust, the confusion! And you have hurt yourself on the hand. . . . I am really very angry! I am altogether put out and cross. Really, my lord, it is too bad. It is most unsuitable work for you. (She half cries and half laughs) And I want you Francis, to take this letter to Monsignor Campden. The carriage is there. I am too busy to go myself—wait for an answer because it is important (with a reassuring glance) That is why I trust no one else with it.

(Francis takes the letter and goes out)

DUCHESS—I have been thinking over all you said. I don't get calmer, I get more angry. I will have my own way. Surely if I have found some one at last I with whom I can be happy, and whom I can make happy, I am right to resent any advice no matter how well meant—and I do resent it—and of course, I see why you have pulled the organ to pieces. You think I ought to be watched—

BISHOP—In chess one is always taught to take care of the Queen! The Queen can move all over the board, whereas the Bishop can only move diagonally!

DUCHESS—(stamping her foot) Oh, how can you sit there talking about chess when I am in—such a rage that it is on the verge of a mortal sin!

BISHOP—It seems to me that if I don't sit peacefully—the mortal sin would be committed. The verge is better.

DUCHESS—You don't seem to understand that you have made me very unhappy.

BISHOP—(more seriously) Now, wait, even if I admit that you care for this boy, how do you know that he cares for you?

DUCHESS—Oh, I know it by a thousand signs!

BISHOP—My dear child, in the depths of his heart he loves Barbara. She is his natural choice—you dazzle him, intoxicate him, if you like—and you have just that power over him which could make him always discontented with any other person, but I want you to use your gifts in quite another direction. I want you to make these two young people happy. All that you do will be well done—that I know.

DUCHESS—I give with all my heart what I have, and indeed, what I have not—when I can borrow it, but you ask for something now which I can neither beg nor borrow—another person's happiness, (she laughs)

BISHOP—Do you suppose I am thinking only of Francis? Am I not thinking of you too? Ah, exercise your prudence.

DUCHESS—But I don't want to! Why should I sacrifice myself for that girl? She is not so hard to please as I am, she could find easily at any ball a dozen young men who might please her, but Francis is to me one in the whole world

BISHOP—Ah, you think so—and the more particularly because someone else admires him also.

DUCHESS—(continuing) She takes all his charm, all his enthusiasm, as a matter of course. When she has been in the world a few years longer and learns to know men and women as I have—Ah, you must understand—One loves his simplicity.

BISHOP—But could you, with your life and your tastes, find pleasure in the perpetual contemplation of unrelieved simplicity? He is not a brilliant boy, he is not a man with a great future, he is just a boyish boy, in fact, to be perfectly honest, he is rather stupid! He is my own nephew and I can say so.

DUCHESS—(begins to laugh) But he is so handsome!

BISHOP—Ah, that is another question altogether. I see you are wavering; you cannot answer my objections.

DUCHESS—I am not wavering, and I don't care whether he is stupid or not.

BISHOP—But you will care, whereas that girl, that poor little girl—would she ever find his intellect somewhat—shall I say drowsy? Never!

DUCHESS—(drily) I am not sure that you know women well.

BISHOP—(rather piqued) I know life, which is more important, perhaps.

DUCHESS—You tempt me to heroism, but I have seen no evidence at all of this great devotion between Francis and Barbara. There! You, my lord, seem to be sustained by inward convictions—graces to which I cannot pretend. I want some sign—something to encourage me.

(At this moment Barbara enters quietly. She seems surprised to see the Duchess and is about to go away)

BISHOP—Don't go away, my child. Come in, although I must go now and get myself tidy. When does the fete begin?

DUCHESS—They ought to be here in about half an hour.

BISHOP—(ruefully) Well, I am afraid they won't be able to use the organ.

(He goes out)

DUCHESS—(carelessly) Do you know you have made a conquest?

BARBARA—Have I?

DUCHESS—Yes, the Bishop—

BARB:—(disappointed) Oh!

DUCHESS—(arranging flowers around the room) Don't you think it is a greater thing to please a saint who is a genius into the bargain than

any ordinary man—(watches the girl) no matter how young or fascinating?

BARB:—I don't see why one couldn't please both.

DUCHESS—(taken aback) perhaps you have. Are you glad that Francis has given up his idea of going into the Church?

BARB:—I think it a pity that all the good men should become priests.

DUCHESS—How long have you known Francis?

BARB:—Two or three years. But we met at long intervals.

DUCHESS—(lightly) Has he changed at all in the last year?

BARB:—In some ways.

DUCHESS—Well, is he nicer than he used to be, or not so nice—that sort of thing?

BARB:—He is more interesting.

DUCHESS—It is a pity he is so timid.

BARB:—Oh, do you think he is timid? (thoughtfully) I haven't noticed that.

DUCHESS—I mean he lacks self-confidence. Surely a man ought to be—well, dashing.

BARB:—How strange it is we should see him so differently. (dreamily) Now, he is quite my idea of a cavalier.

DUCHESS—(quietly) I suppose so. But I feel that he could talk better if he chose.

BARB:—But he is a tremendous talker, dear Duchess. I think that is how he gets on with me. I am perhaps a good listener.

DUCHESS—(at once) What does he talk about?

BARB:—Oh, about his thoughts, what he is going to do, what he has done, and what he thinks about everybody else. It is wonderful to hear what Francis thinks of everybody else. Nothing escapes him—he is such a judge of character.

DUCHESS—(inquisitively) Well, what does he think of me for instance.

BARB:—I think you know.

DUCHESS—No, I don't really. I often wonder. In

fact, I am altogether surprised. I don't believe I know him after all.

BARB:—Well, you see, when he is with you, you talk and he is the listener. That makes such a difference.

(The Duchess is surprised at this and before she can recover from her astonishment Francis enters carrying a letter in his hand)

DUCHESS—Have you come back already?

FRANCIS—Yes, and Monsignor Campden sent you this letter.

(He stands between the two women and while he gives the Duchess the letter he looks at Barbara. The Duchess perceives this. She takes the letter.)

DUCHESS—(lightly) I shall want you in a minute to make some suggestions about the other side of the organ; they are getting out some old tapestry now. Your uncle has quite spoilt my room for the party this afternoon. I will read this letter first.

FRANCIS—I have never seen the Monsignor in such spirits. I suppose he is looking forward to the fete. The whole village is in a state of excitement and rival bands are doing their best to drown each other. One is playing the march from "Faust," and the other is struggling through "Rousseau's Dream." When I left, the Dream was getting the upper hand!

DUCHESS—You said that just like your uncle!

FRANCIS—But wait till you see this! They have been printed at the Abbey under uncle's supervision. They are rather striking.

(He unrolls some posters, very badly printed, the type quite crooked running up into the corner, words are left unfinished. The announcement is

Grande Fete
Donnee Marie de Paque
par la permission
de Madame la Duchesse de Quen)

DUCHESS—(laughing and taking one) I'll go and show it to him.

(She goes out, glancing over her shoulder at the young couple as she goes)

FRANCIS—(awkwardly) I have been down to the Abbey—I wish you had been with me. Where did you hide all the morning?

BARB:—I thought I would keep out of the way.

FRANCIS—(volubly forgetting himself for once in a short burst of emotion) But it was just the day for us! The sky hadn't a cloud, all along the road on either side the flowers were springing up. It was not the time when the birds sing, but I knew they were all around me and I was thinking of you, and how sweet and dear you have always been to me—how you have encouraged, how you have understood me, how patient you have been and —

BARB:—(encouragingly) And then —

FRANCIS—(thoughtfully) Then I thought, that—although this was very beautiful—the life here—it was really only a prelude. I must get to work and deserve my prize—before I think too much about it.

BARB:—What is your prize?

FRANCIS—(suddenly becoming self-conscious) I want to ask you a question.

BARB:—(nervously) What about?

FRANCIS—(In a laboured manner) It is a test question. Now suppose you were in a boat with two friends, and they fell overboard, and you could only save one—which one would you save? It is supposed to be a way of finding out which of the two you like the best, but you must not think over your answer, you must say it quickly —

BARB:—(hurt) Well, if I was in a boat with two friends,—say, your mother and ym mother —

FRANCIS—No, that doesn't come right, if you make it mothers! I think you had better say two

men. I mean, if I were one of them, and a very handsome delightful, brilliant friend were the other, would you let me drown?

BARB:—I never heard of such a question! I don't understand it at all, and of course I can't tell you to your own face that I should save the other and you wouldn't believe me if I did. It is very unkind! (indignantly)

FRANCIS—No, it is only my awkwardness. I wanted to explain that you had been misunderstanding me.

BARB:—Oh, no, I have not. I must say it is very difficult for you, in the present situation, to know just how to act. It is not your fault. I hope it isn't anybody's fault,—but I hate the boat story! It is almost as though you were making fun.

(the Bishop enters and notices her agitation and Francis)

BISHOP—Although I have made myself respectable again the very sight of these tools excites me to work!

(The Duchess's voice is heard calling loudly in the next room)

DUCHESS—Francis! Francis!

BISHOP—I fancy there is some one calling you, Francis!

(Francis goes up, seems to hesitate and the Duchess is heard again—"Francis." He goes out and Barbara stands still a moment until he is out of earshot. She then goes to the Bishop)

BARB:—Oh, my lord, I haven't been able to tell you that I know what is the matter with the organ. I dropped the little chain into it.

BISHOP—What! the little chain with the medal on it?

BARB:—Yes, my lord, I couldn't mention it before the others, because I didn't want anyone to know that you had given it to me.

BISHOP—Then it isn't in the pedals or behind the key board. I needn't have done all this.

BARB:—If you doq' miqd, my lord, I have go a headache. I seems as though I—had a headache.

(She goes out, leaving the Bishop alone)

BISHOP—(at the organ) When I see young people I have not the slightest desire to be young again. It is such a blessing to have got all this kind of thing over and done with. (picking up the tools) Now, I don't see why I shouldn't go on with this; it is very engrossing. (hammers a little) All the same, as we are on the subject of youth, it is astonishing that Francis should really prefer that girl, charming as she may be, to that noble creature whose one fault is too much heart. Yes, her heart runs away with her (starts back) Hallo!

(From the other side of the organ the Duchess's hand covered with rings is seen, holding the small chain)

DUCHESS—(from the other side) I have found it. Oh, I have found it!

BISHOP—Wait, wait, wait, you will hurt yourself, if you are not careful.

(he slides some of the wood back and the Duchess comes through)

BISHOP—So you are the little rift within the lute!

DUCHESS—(holding the chain in her hand) Mind my gown, you are spoiling my gown. I thought I would do my share in the hunt, but, not possessing miraculous gifts, I found this at once. (holding it up) Did you drop it in my lord?

BISHOP—Not I!

DUCHESS—Then whose is it? (she examines it) Why, what is this? Francis! It belongs to Francis!

BISHOP—Is there anything else on it?

DUCHESS—(looking closely) Is there any thing else on it? Barbara. Why, it is scratched on.

BISHOP—Well, are you satisfied now? Do you want any further sign?

PUCESS—Do you suppose he gave it to her, or she gave it to him? (looks at the Bishop and begins to laugh though she is half in tears) He never wrote my name on any medal. I suppose it is a love token. There it is quite plainly—Francis—Barbara. It looks like fate, doesn't it? (she laughs) The two names — —

BISHOP—And you found it!

DUCHESS—(trying to control her chagrin) And she never missed it! If he had given it to me and I had lost it, I should have missed it. But I see you have been right. I have been talking to her. She doesn't know the Frank I know, but it is the real Frank whom neither of us know. He tells her things he would never tell us, and if she doesn't think him stupid, it is because he is not. I have been selfish—I will make it all come right—you shall see.

(The Duchess turns away trying to master her emotion, and seeing Francis and Barbara on the terrace goes to the Bishop and puts her hand on his arm)

DUCHESS—Will you call Francis for me? I don't like to call him myself. I have been calling him too often lately. (she points to the terrace where Barbara and Francis are talking together) And bring in the little girl by and bye.

BISHOP—(meekly) Shall I take her around the lake?

DUCHESS—No, keep near, I don't want you to go so very far away.

(The Bishop is about to speak to her, but checks himself and goes slowly out of the room as the Duchess stands looking at the little chain. When left alone she wipes away some tears. The Bishop is seen talking to Francis on the terrace and Francis comes slowly into the room)

FRANCIS—It is so beautiful in the garden, Uncle says he thinks you ought to come out.

DUCHESS—(lightly) I will come in a minute, but I want to rest first and I want you to amuse me.

FRANCIS—I am not clever enough to do that.

DUCHESS—Well, then I will amuse you. Sit down, (she is about to make room for him on the sofa, hesitates and points to a chair instead) over there and I can sit here. I think I will tell you a little story. Once upon a time —

FRANCIS—(indignant) You treat me as though I were a child.

DUCHESS—Do I? No, really, have you just found that out? Why, Francis, you are a child—not in years perhaps, but certainly in temper. You had much better let me tell you a story. Once upon a time there was a youth and he loved—

FRANCIS—Loved! Did you say?

DUCHESS—Yes, l-o-v-e-d! He loved a very pretty young girl but—(looks at Francis)

FRANCIS—Well—

DUCHESS—But he didn't know it, and so one day he met his fairy godmother. She was not an ugly old godmother, I cannot go so far as that, you could not expect me to say that—and she said to herself, "I must bring him to his senses." Now, what do you suppose she did?

FRANCIS—(roused) I can tell you if you like.

DUCHESS—No, can you? That will be amusing.

FRANCIS—She made herself as fascinating as she could, and she made a fool of the young man!

DUCHESS—No, she didn't! Because you see, she never meant to be sincere; she never supposed that he would think she was. She knew, too, that there was no chance of his ever loving her, that is why it was so harmless, do you see, Frank? She just wanted to make him see how much nicer the girl was than she was. It was

unselfish of the fairy-godmother all the same—
perfectly sweet of the fairy-godmother.

(he looks blankly at her)

Perhaps I don't tell the story well?

FRANCIS—Oh yes, you do! It is what they call
letting me down gently!

DUCHESS—I don't care what you think so long as
you believe that she acted for the best.

FRANCIS—(eagerly) You could have had it all
your own way very easily—oh, so easily!

DUCHESS—Is that true? Then this is my way,
dear. Confess now you are glad? You are se-
cretly relieved?

FRANCIS— And haven't you really cared what
became of me?

DUCHESS—I don't care much about anything else
— and — and—that is, I am so sure and so
convinced that you love Barbara.

(she watches him narrowly but he makes no
protest)

And you do, don't you?

(he looks at her and seems to be distrustful)

I knew it! (she turns to the terrace and calls
Barbara)!

FRANCIS—What are you going to say?

DUCHESS—Oh never mind, something you want to
hear.

(the Bishop and Barbara come in from the
terrace)

DUCHESS—Barbara! What do you think Barbara?
The little chain is found!

BARB:—(embarrassed) Oh, who found it?

DUCHESS—I saw it behind the keys.

FRANCIS—But I thought I lost it on the road last
week. How did it get there?

DUCHESS(looking from one to the other) Is it
yours then? Which is the true owner?

BARB:—(in a low voice) It is not really mine.

BISHOP—(slyly) Could it by any chance belong
to both of you?

DUCHESS—(giving it to Francis) Ask her if it may.

(Francis looks at the Duchess and at Barbara hesitating. The Duchess put her hand on Barbara's shoulder)

Scold him first and say "Yes" afterwards—

(As the young couple turn away the Duchess looks at the Bishop and tries to laugh but it is choked)

BISHOP—(going over to her) It was generously done! You'll be glad—I suppose I may take it that I have lost my roof! But I have gained something better, much better, I have got a new saint instead!

DUCHESS—(through her tears) Oh, it is easy for you to renounce—

BISHOP—Oh, not so easy.

(At this moment Mrs. Hericourt enters with Monsignor Campden)

MRS. H :—(in great excitement going to the Duchess.) My dear Duchess how splendid of you! Monsignor Campden has just told me. I cannot find words—the whole village is overwhelmed with joy!

BISHOP—Surely the news has not reached it already?

MONSIG :—(to Duchess) Have you told his lordship?

DUCHESS—Not a word! As I wrote to you, it has been a secret. (turning to the Bishop) The Bishop, you know, can only move diagonally, whereas the Queen can move all over the board!

BISHOP—What is the mystery? I am suspecting—I am hoping—

MONSIG :—The Duchess has given us the roof as a gift!

(The Bishop is about to thank her, when the Duchess checks him)

DUCHESS—No, no, no thanks! It is a drawn game!

BISHOP—With advantage, I think to the Bishop!
(At this moment the band is heard playing in the distance, "Rousseau's Dream," and great sound of cheering. Two footmen enter ushering in some children headed by a little girl carrying two enormous bouquets followed by the Mayor with an address and a crowd of peasants and others. The Bishop takes the Duchess by the hand to receive the deputation and the curtain falls)

END OF THE PLAY.

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